

Is it Appropriate to Call Someone "Reverend"?

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In today's religious climate, it has become increasingly common for church leaders and clergy to be referred to by titles such as "Reverend" or "Father." However, from a biblical perspective, this practice is not only unwarranted, but potentially problematic.

The term "Reverend" is derived from the Latin word "reverendus," meaning "to be revered." In the Bible, this title is used exclusively in reference to God himself. [Psalm 111:9](#) states, "He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name." The implication is clear - the title of "Reverend" belongs to God alone, and it is inappropriate for any human being to assume this title.

Jesus Himself warned against the misuse of religious titles, stating in [Matthew 23:8-10](#): "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ." Here, Jesus explicitly instructs his followers not to use titles such as "Rabbi," "Father," or "Master," as these belong to God alone.

Furthermore, the practice of addressing church leaders as "Daddy" or "Mummy" is also unbiblical and potentially harmful. These titles suggest a level of reverence and authority that should be reserved for God alone. They can also create an unhealthy power dynamic within the church, where congregants are expected to submit to the leader's authority without question. As Jesus warned, "And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" ([Matthew 23:9-12](#)). The use of these familial titles for church leaders reflects a spirit of pride and arrogance that is contrary to the humble, servant-like attitude that Jesus exemplified.

It is important to note that the use of these titles is not limited to the Christian tradition. In many other religious and spiritual contexts, the tendency to elevate certain individuals to a quasi-divine status is also prevalent. For example, the title "Guru" in Hinduism and "Lama" in Tibetan Buddhism carry similar connotations of spiritual authority and reverence.

However, the biblical perspective is clear - all believers are to be considered equal in the eyes of God, and no individual should be granted a title that belongs to the divine alone. In [Galatians 3:28](#), the apostle Paul writes, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." This passage emphasizes the fundamental equality of all believers, regardless of their social or religious status.

At the same time, the Bible does acknowledge that certain individuals within the church are worthy of "double honor," particularly those who are engaged in the work of preaching and teaching. [1 Timothy 5:17](#) states, "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching." A godly man who exemplifies the qualities outlined in [1 Timothy 3:1-13](#) and sets a godly example in word and deed is worthy of being respected by the congregation. This, however, has to do with recognizing God's appointment and our polite treatment of ministers, as we are called to respect all people ([1 Peter 2:17](#)).

However, today, many church leaders have also adopted various forms of distinctive clothing and symbols in order to set themselves apart from the rest of the congregation. This includes the wearing of clerical collars, special robes or vestments, ornate hats, and even carrying ceremonial batons or scepters. Such practices find no precedent in the example set by the apostles or the teachings of Jesus ([Matthew 20:25-28](#)). The apostles, who were directly commissioned by Christ, did not adorn themselves with special garments or accoutrements to distinguish their status. Rather, they followed the example of humility and servant leadership modeled by Jesus, who "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant" ([Philippians 2:7](#)). As the disciples later learned, "Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister; And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all" ([Mark 10:43-44](#)). The early church leaders did not seek to elevate themselves above the brethren, but rather served the congregation with selflessness and integrity. The book of Acts describes them as ordinary men who "had been with Jesus" ([Acts 4:13](#)), not as a clergy class set apart by their attire or trappings of authority. This spirit of humility and equality among believers is a hallmark of the New Testament church and should be emulated by those who would serve in spiritual leadership today.

In addition to the misuse of honorific titles and distinctive outward symbols of authority, the use of other titles such as "His Holiness," "Monseigneur," and various honorifics that place an individual in a position of reverence is also unbiblical and reflective of the spirit of the Nicolaitans, a group condemned in the book of Revelation for their tendency to lord over the people ([Revelation 2:6, 15](#)). All such titles that elevate one person above others are a manifestation of pride and arrogance, which are antithetical to the humble, servant-like spirit that Jesus exemplified and called his followers to emulate.

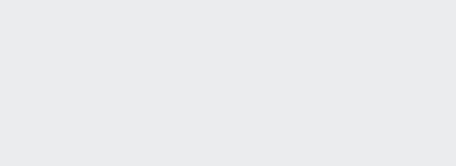
In summary, the use of any titles that suggest a level of reverence or authority beyond that which is appropriate for a fellow believer is not supported by biblical teaching. These titles belong to God alone, and it is important for Christians to be mindful of the language they use when addressing their spiritual leaders. By rejecting these unbiblical titles, we can better align our practices with the teachings of Jesus and avoid the potential pitfalls of spiritual hierarchy and abuse.

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